

BETTER BACKS FOR LIFE - PART IV

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Brief Recap of Part I & II & III

POWER POSTURE SEQUENCE

- * Chin retraction
- * Shoulder - "Scapular Set"
- * "Hip-Rib" Check
- * "Glut Max" Squeeze

ACTIVE RANGE OF MOTION SEQUENCE

(AROM) Utilizing Muscle to Achieve Full Mobility - Adapted for Water by C. Kopansky

- * Standing back extension
- * Hip extension - standing/upright
- * Hip-Hinge I
- * Hip-Hinge II
- * Hip flexion/extension combo conditioner
- * Seated core push-pull conditioner
- * Hamstring stretch
- * Standing dynamic torso spiral stretch

Wow, we are really building a wonderful series of effective back exercises. By progressing through all the stages in building a better back, one also has an excellent opportunity to improve body awareness. The back is a big winner in the series. However, other muscles in the body will also become both stronger and more supple by repeating the exercises in the sequence that have been presented in this ongoing series.

The following exercise is fun as it has definite progressions that require time and effort to achieve. As you progress from Level One to Four, celebrate your development and recognize the way in which your body is moving towards improved health and well being.

The key to all levels is slow controlled active range of motion. There is no hurry. In fact the slower the better for developing back strength.

"Scapular Opening Stretches"

One knee tuck scapular opening; progress to tucked scapular push-up; progress to rock climber back extension; progress to prone long bridge.

- This stretch progresses from basic beginner to highly advanced which is suitable for a participant with excellent body awareness and a well conditioned body.
- Select the option that is most suitable and use in deep water, suspended with a flotation belt.

Level One: One knee tuck scapular opening:

It is recommended that everyone start at Level One regardless of fitness level. This will ensure correct exercise execution. A warm pool (87 degrees plus) is most suit-

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able for this stretch - active range of motion (AROM) exercise.

Technique:

- Assume a vertical "floating" position with body core gently activated.
- Bring one knee slowly towards the chest, keep other leg relaxed and fully extended directly underneath body.
- As knee reaches maximum height, assist the stretch by hugging the front of shin with both arms.
- Reach knee towards chest and simultaneously reach chest towards knee. The body may move slightly forward of vertical.
- Visualize the low back opening. Relax the lower leg and foot.
- Focus on the area between shoulder blades. Open up both scapula by actively pushing rhomboid muscles up towards where wall meets ceiling. Feel the work and the release in area between shoulder blades.
- Hold for 8 - 32 seconds, depending on the temperature of the water.
- Retract from the hug position gently. Slowly open body and return to start position, hanging vertically in water with both legs long and relaxed.
- To keep body warm consider performing a slow, full range of motion cross country ski action. Then change sides and bring the other knee towards chest.

Level Two: Progression to tucked scapular push-up:

Technique:

The only thing that changes in level two, is both knees are lifted to chest simultaneously, instead of one at a time.

When in the tuck position, embrace a 'womb like' feeling of security and safety. Open the middle back to positive energy. Feel the water cradling your body.

Level Three: Progression to rock climber back extension:

Technique:

Start vertical, bring both knees to chest, perform the scapular push up, then gently tilt body forward to a prone position keeping knees tucked to chest and scapula open.

- Slowly extend both legs to a diagonal prone position.
- Keep abs active and scapula open until legs are fully extending and body is in a straight line.
- Perform a gently arch in the lower back region, maintaining abdominal activation throughout and hold for 8 - 32 seconds as thermal comfort allows.
- Gently tuck both knees to chest and open scapula and return to vertical start position.

Level Four: Progress to prone long bridge:

Technique:

The only thing that changes in Level Four is the body is completely prone on one end, and completely supine on the other end of the movement sequence.

The key to all levels is slow controlled active range of motion. There is no hurry. In fact the slower the better for developing back strength.

Look for the Prone power quadriceps stretch for Better Backs in the next issue of Wavelink.

